

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 00421 220412Z  
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
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AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 0421

C O R E C T E D C O P Y (DELETION OF REFERENCE)

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, EC, PE  
SUBJECT: ECUADOR-PERU BORDER DISPUTE -- GOE VIEW

1. SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFFS HIGH GOE OFFICIALS  
RECOGNIZE FACT THAT BORDER INCIDENTS ARE  
NOT UNUSUAL, BUT DISPUTE GOP CONTENTION THAT ALL ARE CAUSED  
BY ECUADOREANS. MAJOR QUESTION IS WHY GOP CHOSE THIS POINT  
IN TIME TO MAKE PUBLIC ITS CONCERNS, AS WELL AS MANNER IN  
WHICH IT CHOSE TO DO SO. BEST CONCLUSION: INTERNAL  
PERUVIAN POLITICS ARE AT FAULT. SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS ARE  
NOT PANICKED BUT ARE CONCERNED LEST SITUATION GET OUT OF  
HAND. THEY NOTE THAT SKIMISHES CONTINUED TO OCCUR ON JANUARY 19  
BETWEEN UNITS OUT OF COMMUNICATION WITH HEADQUARTERS. THEY HOPE,  
HOWEVER, THAT ISSUE WILL DIE DOWN AFTER EXCHANGE OF  
COMMUNIKES AND JANUARY 20 MEETING OF ARMY CHIEFS. EDITORIAL  
COMMENT HAS BEEN QUITE CONCILIATORY, EMPHASIZING  
DANGERS OF POSSIBLE BORDER CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.  
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PAGE 02 QUITO 00421 220412Z

2. AMBASSADOR AND DCM TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A DINNER AT  
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ON JANUARY 19, AT WHICH FOREIGN  
MINISTER AYALA AND DEFENSE MINISTER ARRATA PLUS NUMEROUS  
OTHER OFFICIALS WERE PRESENT, IN ORDER TO SOLICIT VIEWS  
ON BORDER SITUATION. GEN. ARRATA SAID THAT ECUADOREAN  
AND PERUVIAN SOLDIERS ARE STILL SHOOTING AT EACH OTHER

IN THE GRAY BORDER AREA. ATTEMPTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOME UNITS HAVE NOT BEEN ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL, BUT HE HOPED BOTH SIDES WOULD WITHDRAW UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS JANUARY 19. ARRATA SAID THAT MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE JANUARY 20 IN EL ORO PROVINCE FRONTIER AREA BETWEEN ARMY CHIEFS OF STAFF RICHTER OF PERU AND CABRERA OF ECUADOR.

3. ECUADOREAN OFFICIALS NOTED THAT BORDER INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED OFF AND ON OVER THE YEARS, AND THEY ALL SPECULATED ON GOP RATIONALE IN BLOWING IT UP PUBLICLY AT THIS TIME. THE BEST ESTIMATES WERE THAT IT INVOLVES INTERNAL PERUVIAN POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND GOP'S EFFORTS TO DIVERT PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM THEM, AND GOP DESIRE TO RATIONALIZE BREAKING OFF TALKS ON BORDER DEMARCATION.

4. ECUADOREAN OFFICIALS ARE ALSO UPSET WITH WHAT THEY CALL THE SUDDEN AND SURPRISING WAY THE COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED. THEY FIRMLY DENIED, IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT QUESTIONS, THAT MATTER HAD BEEN RAISED PREVIOUSLY IN A PRIVATE NOTE, EITHER IN QUITO OR LIMA. FIRST INKLING THEY HAD OF THE CHARGES WAS WHEN AMBASSADOR TO PERU VALENCIA WAS CALLED IN BY PERU FONOFF ON JANUARY 18. GOE ALSO RESENTED THE FACT THAT THE GOP IN REMARKS TO THE PRESS CHARACTERIZED ADMIRAL POVEDA'S CALL TO MARALES BERMUDEZ AS BEING AN "EXPLICACION".  
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PAGE 03 QUITO 00421 220412Z

5. AT THIS POINT, GOE WOULD PREFER TO SIMPLY LET THE MATTER DROP. BOTH SIDES HAVE ISSUED COMMUNIQUE AND, EVEN THOUGH THE GOE DOESN'T BELIEVE IT HAS CONVINCED WORLD OPINION THAT PERU IS IN THE WRONG, IT FEELS PURSUING THE MATTER WOULD BE DANGEROUS. IN RESPONSE TO DCM QUESTION WHETHER GOE WOULD CONSIDER ASKING OAS TO INVESTIGATE, SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS INDICATED THEY THOUGHT SUCH ACTION WOULD BE PREMATURE AND ONLY EXACERBATE THE SITUATION. THEY SAID THAT THEY WERE KEEPING THE IDEA IN MIND IN CASE THE SITUATION DOES NOT RESOLVE ITSELF.

6. EDITORIAL COMMENT TO DATE HAS TAKEN A SIMILARLY LOW-KEY LINE. WHILE CATEGORIZING THE GOP ACCUSATIONS AS FALSE, MAJOR PAPERS ARE TAKING THE LINE THAT ANY BORDER PROBLEMS COULD PRODUCE SERIOUS CONFRONTATION AND NEGATE THE BENEFITS BETTER BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE PRODUCED. EDITORIALS CALL UPON GOE TO RESPOND IN FIRM BUT CONCILIATORY WAY.

COMMENT: THE GOE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE TREATMENT BEING GIVEN TO THESE INCIDENTS. THE FACT

THAT BORDER INCIDENTS DO OCCUR DOES NOT BOTHER IT SO MUCH AS THE FACT THAT GIVING PUBLICITY AND CASTING CHARGES WITH REGARD TO SUCH INCIDENTS COULD JEOPARDIZE TALKS ON AMAZON ACCESS AND OTHERWISE CAUSE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS. GOE WILL DO ITS BEST, AS IT DID IN THE FISHING BOAT INCIDENT, TO PLAY DOWN THE MATTER. THIS INCIDENT COULD HAVE ONE BENEFICIAL EFFECT, HOWEVER, AS IT SHOULD SPUR BOTH SIDES TO GREATER EFFORTS TO CONTROL MOVEMENT OF THEIR TROOPS IN THE UNDEMARCATED BORDER AREA.

8. THE ECUADOREAN ATTITUDE CLOAKS A LATER FEAR THAT PERU MAY BE USING INCIDENTS TO CREATE A PRETEXT FOR ANOTHER WAR. THE 1941 WAR WAS HERALDED BY SUCH CHARGES. NEVERTHELESS, GOE HAS ADOPTED A PRONOUNCED CASUAL MILITARY  
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PAGE 04 QUITO 00421 220412Z

POSTURE IN THE FACE ON THE CONTRETEMPS. ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT TROOPS IN THE BORDER PROVINCES MAY NOW BE ON THE ALERT, OTHER UNITS ARE NOT AND SENIOR OFFICERS IN QUITO ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS ROUTINELY.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014